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**The Rhythms of the Loom:  
Keeping India's Heritage Alive**





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# EDITORIAL

## Weaving Stories, Building Futures

As we celebrate National Handloom Day, this special edition honors India's magnificent handloom heritage – a sector employing over 4.3 million artisans and representing the soul of sustainable fashion.

Our pages are filled with insightful contributions from a diverse range of voices. We are honored to feature pieces from the **Textiles Committee and Anveshanam Foundation**, providing a comprehensive look at the industry's past, present, and future.

We proudly acknowledge **Dr. Ela Manoj Dedhia** — PhD Guide, University of Mumbai; **Director, Anveshanam Foundation** ; and Trustee (UK), Society of Dyers & Colorists (SDC) — whose unwavering commitment to textile education and research inspires countless artisans and students alike. Her leadership continues to bridge tradition with modernity in India's dynamic textile sector. NIFT scholars and professors, alongside researchers from the **Bombay Textile Research Association** and multiple colleges, share their innovative perspectives, bridging tradition with modernity.

We also get to know **Megastores**, a pioneering Mumbai-based online marketplace that's revolutionizing how we connect with authentic Indian handmade products.

This edition also features exclusive interviews with leading brands like **Saraswati Rugs and Telephone Yarn**, giving you a glimpse into their inspiring journeys.

Today's handloom industry stands at a remarkable crossroads where ancient techniques meet contemporary design, sustainability demands align with traditional practices, and global markets embrace authentic craftsmanship. Every handloom purchase supports preservation of traditions, artisan livelihoods, and sustainable fashion.

Let us celebrate the hands that create, the minds that innovate, and the hearts that keep these traditions alive.

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# HANDLOOM MARK SCHEME – A PATHWAY TO AUTHENTICITY



**DR. MURALIDHARA K S**  
JOINT DIRECTOR  
TEXTILES COMMITTEE, GOVT. OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF TEXTILES

## Background

The handloom sector is not just a vital economic contributor but a living embodiment of India's artistic legacy. Across the country, generations of weavers have kept this heritage alive with skill, patience, and pride, producing textile that reflect the soul of their communities, the sector provides sustainable livelihoods to millions, especially in the rural and semi-urban areas, empowering families and preserving age-old traditions.

Handloom textiles constitute a timeless facet of the rich cultural heritage of India. As an economic activity, the Handloom sector occupies a place second only to agriculture in providing livelihood to the people. According to the All India Handloom Census, the total number of households engaged in handloom-like weaving and allied activities is 31.45 lakh (2019-20), working on approximately 28.2 lakh handlooms. The four states of Assam (10.9 lakh), West Bengal (3.4 lakh), Manipur (2.1 lakh) and Tamil Nadu (1.7lakh) account for 18 lakh households. Nearly 88.7 per cent of households are located in rural areas, and 72 percent of workers are female.

The annual production of handloom fabric is estimated to be approximately 6806 Mn.Sq.m which accounts for around 15% of India's total textile production. Of the total personnel engaged in the production of handloom products, 6.83 lakh people weave Sarees, 7.97 lakh people are engaged in the production of Shawls, Mekhla, Chaddar, Loi, Stole, Scarf and Mufflers. 5.80 lakh workers are engaged in the production of Angavastram, Dhoti, Sarong and Lungi. Another 1.01 lakh people engaged in the production of Bedsheets and other Furnishing clothes. Other products produced on handloom include Dress materials, Shirting, Long cloth, Surgical Bandage, etc

Through these varieties of products, the traditional hand weavers produce unimaginable creativity on cloth. However, the unregulated use of the phrase "Handloom" has allowed non-handloom products to flood the market, causing misrepresentation and unfair competition. Mass-produced powerloom and mill-made items often masquerade as handloom, eroding consumer trust and placing genuine artisans at a disadvantage. This situation has not only affected the income of traditional weavers but has also blurred the lines between authenticity and imitation. When buyers cannot differentiate between hand-woven and machine-made, the value of genuine craftsmanship diminishes.



### Handloom Mark Scheme – The Govt of India Initiative

problems, the office of the Development Commissioner for Handloom (O/o DCHL) under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, has launched the Handloom Mark (HLM) scheme in the august hands of the then Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 28.06.2006.



The basic objective of the Scheme is to brand India's handloom products and secure a premium position for them in domestic as well as international markets. The Textiles Committee has been the Implementing Agency of the HLM scheme since its launch in 2006.

### Handloom Mark & Logo

The Handloom Mark provides a collective identity to the handloom products and can be used not only for popularising the hand-woven products but can also serve as a guarantee for the buyer. The handloom mark would therefore be a hallmark of powerful creative work that defines the product with clarity, distinguishes it from the competition and connects it with customers. The niche products woven on handlooms and bearing the handloom mark are a very strong marketing tool.



The Handloom Mark logo was developed by the NID, indicating the interlocking of warp and weft yarn, symbolising the collaborative institutes giving their inputs and artisans giving their skills. The Handloom Mark and logo have been registered as Certification Trade Mark under the Trade Mark Act 1999 and therefore restricted to be used only by registered users.

### HLM Labels

Handloom Mark Label contains Handloom Mark Logo and an intricate, dynamic QR code for each label. Specially designed polyester taffeta labels containing the handloom logo and unique QR Codes are affixed to all hand-woven fabrics and products made thereof.





The QR codes printed on each label trace the label to the producer. This ensures complete originality and genuineness of the product about the loom origin. Through this non-repeatable QR code the traceability is achieved, and also the sustainability goal is achieved. This handloom mark, therefore, acts as a market linkage to the weavers. The labels are currently being sold for 50 paisa per label.

### Registration under the Handloom Mark Scheme

Anyone involved in the production of handloom products can register with the Textiles Committee to avail the benefits of the HLM Scheme. For registration online application can be made through the dedicated portal [www.hlm.gov.in](http://www.hlm.gov.in). Once the application is received, the on-site verification of the production centre will be conducted by the officials from the Textiles Committee to confirm that the applicant actually owns and produces on Handlooms. Based on the production pattern number of people involved in production and the number of handloom annual label entitlements arrived.

Anyone involved in the production of handloom merchandise, like Individual weavers, Master weavers, Apex & Primary handloom weavers, Co-operative societies, Handloom development corporations, self-help groups, manufacturer-exporters, etc, are entitled to register in the scheme. So far, more than 25,000 users under different categories are registered under the Handloom Mark Scheme throughout the country and more than 24 cr. products are tagged with Handloom Mark Labels, which currently cost 50 paise per label. The registration so far has covered 6 lakhs weavers engaged in weaving on 9.30 lakh handlooms.





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**Ankit Jain**  
**Managing Director**  
**TELEPHONE YARN**  
**Neelam Thread Pvt. Ltd.**

**TELEPHONE YARN**, the flagship brand of Neelam Thread Pvt. Ltd., has pioneered India's embroidery thread industry since 1979. Renowned for manufacturing premium Viscose Rayon and Polyester embroidery threads in over 2,000 color shades, the company serves fashion designers, exporters, and home décor brands across India and global markets.

The management team combines tradition and innovation: **Ankit Jain, Managing Director**, leads growth initiatives focusing on sustainability, while **Amit Jain**, Director, oversees dyeing and production excellence. With 700 tonnes of annual production capacity, **TELEPHONE YARN** commits to timely delivery, superior quality, and environmental responsibility.

Recently, **TVC Media** spoke with Ankit Jain about balancing legacy with innovation.

**What core values have maintained your leadership in the embroidery thread market for over 46 years?**

Our growth stems from quality, innovation, and customer-centricity. We uphold the values of our founder, the late Shri Stander Kumar Jain, while continuously modernizing operations. Our threads deliver durability, precision, and consistent performance, meeting global standards. We prioritize client needs through customized shades, fast service, and dependable support. Innovation drives us to explore new materials and sustainable solutions. Transparency, honesty, and long-term partnerships define our ethical business practices.

## How is Neelam Thread responding to the increasing demand for eco-friendly, sustainable threads?

We actively integrate sustainable practices across operations:



- **Sustainable Product Development:** FSC-certified viscose threads and upcoming GRS-certified polyester threads
- **Clean Energy Adoption:** Solar energy investment reducing carbon footprint
- **OEKO-TEX Certification:** Threads certified free from harmful substances

Additional sustainability measures include:

- ETP Plant treating and reusing wastewater
- Gas-based boilers replacing coal for reduced emissions
- 100% solar energy and LED lights in the Delhi office
- Partnerships with certified suppliers (FSC, OEKO-TEX)

## What strategies help manage raw material cost pressures and ensure uninterrupted production?

Despite fluctuations in the cost of viscose and polyester, we offer stable pricing through planned procurement and efficient production. We adapt quickly to demand patterns, prioritizing high-moving shades for timely deliveries, and continuously improving production, dyeing processes, and waste reduction to control internal costs without compromising quality. Product diversification across multiple thread types reduces dependency on single materials.

## How have investments in high-tech dyeing plants and automation revolutionized your production?

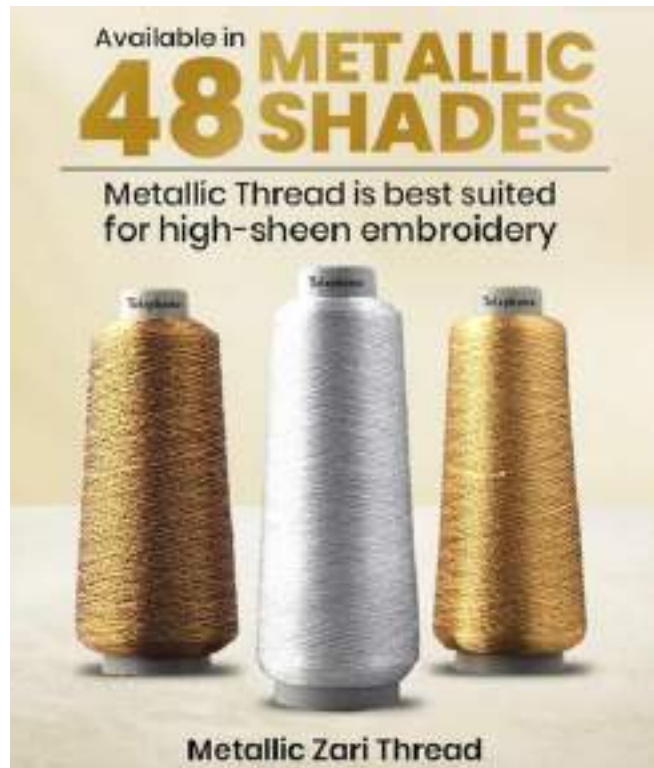
Our modern dyeing setup enables precise shade control and consistency, reducing reworks and ensuring quicker turnaround times. Automated winding, rewinding, and packing systems ensure uniform tension and finish in every tube. Real-time monitoring and process optimization significantly improve production speed, reduce wastage, and ensure uninterrupted supply during peak demands.

## How do you anticipate and respond to changing fashion trends?

We stay connected to the fashion industry pulse through designer engagement, global fashion forecasts, and textile exhibitions. Our in-house color lab enables quick shade development and precise color matching. We experiment with special-effect threads like ombré, metallic blends, and matte textures, aligning with evolving design preferences.

## How do you balance focus between traditional viscose and emerging categories like trilobal polyester?

Viscose rayon remains our cornerstone for 40+ years, valued for its luxurious sheen and soft texture. Responding to demand for cost-effective alternatives, we introduced trilobal polyester threads in 2001 for high-speed embroidery and vibrant finishes. With increasing preference for matte-finish embroidery, we launched spun polyester threads in 2016 under the "Worldwide" brand. Each thread serves distinct purposes, providing clients with versatile solutions for various design aesthetics.



## What challenges has Neelam Thread faced in expanding globally?

Honestly, we haven't actively explored exports until now, focusing primarily on domestic markets. However, with growing international buyer interest, we're strategically preparing to enter export markets. Challenges include understanding diverse market needs, meeting international compliance standards, and creating reliable distribution networks. We're strengthening certifications like Sedex and Higg, aligning shade ranges with global trends, and enhancing digital presence through textile events.





## What are your strategic goals for the next five years?

Our focus areas include:

### Innovation:

- Diversifying with new-age embroidery threads featuring textured finishes
- Multi-effect threads and customized solutions for high-speed industrial machines

### Sustainability:

- Scaling recycled thread range and adopting eco-efficient dyeing technologies
- Expanding solar power usage and reducing water/chemical consumption
- FSC-certified viscose threads from responsibly managed forests
- GRS-certified recycled polyester from post-consumer plastic waste

### Market Expansion:

- Establishing a strong export footprint
- Targeting global fashion brands and ethnic garment manufacturers
- D2C e-commerce platforms and B2B partnerships with apparel exporters

The future combines tradition with transformation—delivering high-quality, responsibly made threads while investing in our people for the next decade's challenges.





## A HERITAGE WOVEN WITH THE PURPOSE

In the heart of Rajasthan, where every thread tells a story, Saraswati Rugs has quietly shaped a legacy of design, craftsmanship and **empowerment since 1986.**

The journey began with a simple idea: if one loom could support a family, then thousands could uplift entire communities.

Over the years, this idea took the shape of a vision that now connects over 10,000 artisans across India, crafting hand-knotted rugs for homes around the world.

From over 2,250 looms across India to a presence in 57 countries and even their own warehouse in the U.S., Saraswati Rugs has grown with purpose. Yet at its core, it remains rooted in people, processes and a deep respect for handloom heritage.

What makes **Saraswati Rugs stand apart** is how seamlessly the brand brings heritage into **modern living.** Their rugs carry the essence of traditional craftsmanship while blending effortlessly into global homes, from contemporary city lofts to warm, minimalist interiors. With each design, there's an emotional narrative, an artisan's touch, a designer's intuition and a family's livelihood intricately knotted together.



## A CONVERSATION IN THREADS AND TIME

Let's find out from the mastermind himself what the early days of building Saraswati Rugs were like.

**Mr. Mahesh K. Choudhary:** "It began with curiosity. There was a government carpet training centre near my village, and I explored it. That one step opened the door to an entire ecosystem of skills, opportunities, and cultural wealth. As we expanded across Gujarat and Rajasthan, I realised we were doing more than making carpets; we were creating livelihoods, especially for people who didn't have many. When I saw young boys and girls working on looms and later sending their siblings to school, I knew this was a path worth continuing."



**Mahesh K. Choudhary**

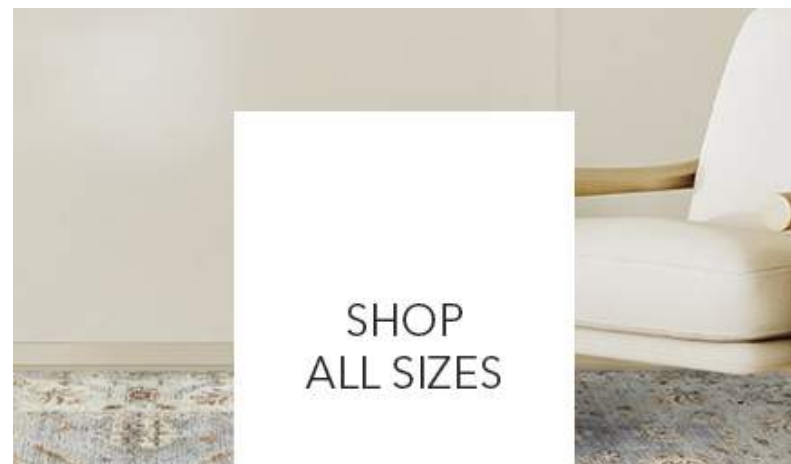
**With so many artisans across rural India, how do you maintain such high quality?**

It has always been about trust and systems. Long before mobile phones, we installed wireless towers across our loom belts in Gujarat. This helped us stay in touch with loom clusters and ensure quality, even in remote areas. We have Area Managers who oversee 25 looms. Over time, we've built our own yarn-spinning units, dyeing facilities, and finishing units. It's a fully self-sufficient ecosystem, and that gives us control over quality at every stage.



**What kind of home do you imagine when you design a Saraswati Rug?**

Every rug we create is meant to live with people, not just lie on the floor. We think of warm corners in homes where laughter echoes, spaces where every detail matters. Our design process begins with trend research, colour palettes, fabric forecasts and lifestyle moods. **My daughter, Preeti,** leads the design department, working with Indian and global collaborators.



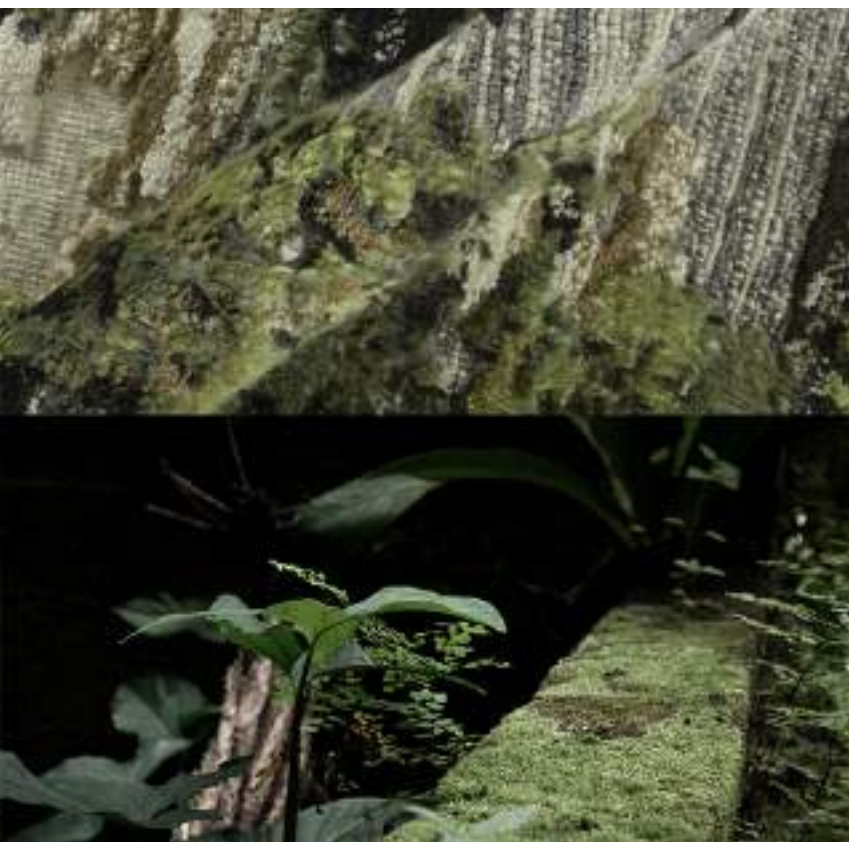


**How do you see your role today, as a business leader or as a custodian of tradition?**

Both, actually. Running a business means being practical, but leading a handloom enterprise is also deeply emotional. Our artisans are not workers; they are collaborators. We created the Saraswatii Foundation to support them beyond the loom, with scholarships, healthcare, education for their children and even personal assistance when needed. When one of them builds a home or sends their child to college, that's the real reward.

### **Living With Purpose, Designing With Soul**

Saraswati Rugs crafts more than 5000 unique designs using **natural fibres like wool, silk, viscose, and cotton**. These rugs are known to last decades, ageing beautifully with time, just like the memories they gather. Depending on the size and complexity, a single rug can take **9 weeks to 9 months to complete**. The deeper the weave, the finer the story.



Through its initiatives like **Better Life** and **Nurturing Dreams**, the company has also built schools, offered scholarships and enabled self-employment. This is where design meets dignity, where rugs are symbols of aesthetic value and economic change.

Today, from boutique interiors in Paris to family homes in Jaipur, **Saraswati Rugs continues to create grounded luxury**, handmade in India, admired across the world. True to its name, a homage to the founder's mother and the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati is more than a brand. It is a way of life, a celebration of Indian craft, and a journey in progress.

[www.saraswatiglobal.com](http://www.saraswatiglobal.com)